

RECORD YEAR

**EYT tops 100,000
coach passengers
for first time**

DRIVING SEAT

**CPT installs
FirstBus man
as new chief**

CBW

Coach and Bus Week

The PSV industry's news weekly • 21 December 1996 • Issue 249

NO SMOKING

**PSVs officially
UK's cleanest
vehicles**

HERO AT WHEEL

**Marksman's
tribute to the
coach driver**

ARCH RIVAL

**Citroën's Ducato lookalike
gets top marks**



**All the PSV News 4-11 • Tour News 12&13 • Legal News 14&15 • Marksman 16 • Diary 19
• Letters 21 • Cover Story 22-24 • Christmas Story 25 • Deals 26&27 • People 47**

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53 reclining seats, grey graffiti moquette, courier seat, rear offside continental door, tinted double glazed side windows, curtains, carpets, power entrance door, TELMA, finished cream/maroon.
M.O.T. JULY 1997

1992 (February) DENNIS JAVELIN 11M DUPLÉ 320

55 seats, brown striped moquette, tinted side windows, power entrance door, finished cream, red/maroon. M.O.T. FEBRUARY 1997

1990 (January) MERCEDES BENZ 408 Crystals Conversion

15 seats, brown striped moquette, luggage racks, finished white/orange/brown.
M.O.T. JANUARY 1997

1989 (February) DENNIS JAVELIN 12M DUPLÉ 320

51 reclining seats, brown/yellow/orange moquette, rear nearside floor mounted toilet, tinted side windows, power entrance door, finished white/orange/red.
M.O.T. MAY 1997

1988 (June) VAN HOOL T815 12M (Cummins L10 Engine)

49 reclining seats, grey/red moquette, tinted double glazed side windows, curtains, centre sunken toilet, continental door, water boiler, coolbox, wired TV/video, TELMA, power entrance door, finished white/orange/brown. M.O.T. FEBRUARY 1997

1985 (December) LEYLAND TIGER (Cummins L10 Engine) DUPLÉ LAZER II - 11M

53 seats, blue/grey moquette, tinted double glazed side windows, power entrance door, finished cream/duo red.
M.O.T. MARCH 1997

1984 (April) BEDFORD YNT 11M DUPLÉ LAZER 1

51 seats, brown striped moquette, tinted side windows, power entrance door, finished white/orange/brown.
M.O.T. APRIL 1997

1982 (June) LEYLAND TIGER 12M DUPLÉ GOLDLINER IV

49 reclining seats, brown/orange moquette, courier seat, rear continental door, tinted double glazed side windows, power entrance door with peage window, rear offside sunken toilet, drinks machine, crew compartment, finished white/red.
M.O.T. MARCH 1997

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for BTTF 1997

CBW

Coach and Bus Week

How to have a happy new year

A SUBSCRIPTION to *CBW* is one of the wisest choices for a Christmas present — either for yourself or an industry colleague. You get more than simply the best magazine for the PSV industry. We bring you the acclaimed Coach Industry Awards, the promise of our exciting and dynamic *Coach and Bus Live* show. AND we campaign on your behalf.

Three months ago our respected columnist of 15 years, Marksman, again put his finger on the industry pulse when he claimed the over-zealous enforcement activities of the Vehicle Inspectorate had to stop. Operators had written, faxed and phoned with their criticism.

CBW took up the challenge on behalf of the industry. Give us the evidence, we said, and you didn't let us down.

So, armed with a sack full of bad news (minus the names and addresses), we headed for the Vehicle Inspectorate's headquarters and an interview with its chief executive, Ron Oliver who, by now, had become deeply concerned that the industry's perceptions of VI activity did not meet the reality according to reports from its own staff.

The most alarming aspect of the exercise to CBW and the VI is that operators demanded that they remain anonymous. Almost to a man they said: "Don't reveal my name."

But it's a catch the 22 bus situation. If you don't give the VI

full chapter and verse, including names and dates, how can they investigate? Should you pin your name to an allegation of incompetence, can you be sure that there will not be a coincidental targeting of your company's vehicles?

Mr Oliver promised that no such reprisals would take place and we trust that this is the case. Our promise to the industry is that this is not a shortlived seasonal gesture: take Mr Oliver at his word, and we will test the theory.

Everyone agrees that inconsistencies must be ironed out of the system and the controversial targeting and prohibition notice gathering comes to an end. You will read on page 4 of this issue what the VI is doing, but we are saving the detailed report for the start of next year.

Meanwhile, we need to be certain that its changes are working, so keep the evidence flowing. Start now, don't make your reports retrospective, and, if you wish, keep them anonymous.



A happy Christmas and a prosperous New Year!

Mike Morgan, Editor

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events

28 January: The Development of Surface Access Links to Airports (CIT), Langham Hilton Hotel, London. Chaired by Steven Norris. Contact Sarah Loader, Waterfront, on 0171 233 7600

6 February: Confederation of Passenger Transport Annual Dinner, Grosvenor House Hotel, London. Contact Mike Bartlett, on 0171 240 3131, fax 0171 240 7900

11-13 February: Smart Card 97, Olympia 2, London. Contact QMS Ltd, on 01733 394304, fax 01733 390042

13 February: Buses Worldwide meeting, Fred Tallent Hall, Drummond Street, London NW1. Slides from members' individual travels. Details from Ian Johnston, 3 Cypress Drive, Fleet, Hants, GU13 9HE

17-22 February 1997: CBW/Tappins trip to Hong Kong. Price of £1,095 per head includes sightseeing tour, visit to Hong Kong Bus Company, express coach journey to Canton and tour escorts. Places strictly limited and going fast. Full details from Paul Tappin on 01235 812127, fax 01235 816464

8,9,10 April: *Coach and Bus Live*, Donington. New vehicle launches, the top manufacturers, ride-and-drive vehicle testing, and a classic coach and bus show. Book track time to test new and second-hand coaches, or drive new bus models on a simulated urban test track. Displayed past, present and future coaches and buses. Open ONLY to bona fide operators and senior staff. Details from Toni King on 01733 467035

STOP PRESS

Over 1,000 visitor registrations for *Coach and Bus Live* have been received in the first week since the application form appeared in *CBW*. Don't forget the ticket hotline 01733 467169

Coach and Bus

Lockhead next CPT president

FIRSTBUS chief executive Moir Lockhead OBE has been appointed president of the Confederation of Passenger Transport.

At next year's annual CPT dinner, Mr Lockhead will succeed Ron Whittle in his new post, with the backing of three vice-presidents: Tony Depledge of Blackpool Transport; David Humphrey of London United Busways; and Dennis Noble of Weirs Tours.

"This is, indeed, a great honour," said Mr Lockhead. "I can assure operators that I am fully committed to fighting their corner over the next year.

"We will work with the new government to ensure they are aware of the priorities of CPT members at the earliest opportunity. We already

maintain close contact with front-bench representatives from all three major parties, and so are well prepared for any eventuality.

"The focus of this year must be quality; driving up standards across the industry, continuing the introduction of quality partnerships between local authorities and operators, and ensuring fair and proper enforcement to maintain the quality of service which we must all achieve."

Mr Lockhead is an engineer by profession, who served his apprenticeship with the NBC.

He joined Grampian Transport as general manager in 1985, and became managing director on the formation of the company



Moir Lockhead: 'honour'

in October 1986.

Three years later, he led the management/employee buyout of GRT and was appointed executive chairman.

The company was floated in 1994, and merged with Badgerline to form FirstBus in June 1995. The group is now the largest in the coach and bus industry.

Mr Lockhead is married with four children, and counts among his hobbies 'amateur farming' - he rears Highland cattle at his home in Scotland.

Coach

Threat Cross

Rail Link dev

LONDON'S historic King's Cross coach terminal could close when the Channel Tunnel Rail Link development goes ahead. As yet there are no alternative facilities in the plans.

Major civil engineering work at St Pancras could start within 12 months, closing the section of Pancras Road alongside the station used as the King's Cross terminus by express coach services operated by six companies.

Necessary authorisation in the CTRL Bill, which is edging closer to the Statute Book, will result in a new railway line being built across north

Coach and Bus

No reprisals for complaints - VI chief

OPERATORS worried about reprisals if they complain about the Vehicle Inspectorate have no grounds for their fears, according to chief executive Ron Oliver.

Talking in an exclusive *CBW* interview in the wake of mounting complaints from the coach and bus

industry alleging over-zealous enforcement, Mr Oliver said he was deeply concerned when told operators were anxious to remain anonymous.

He said reprisals were contrary to the culture he was striving to build and that any evidence of such behaviour by VI staff would be rigorously investigated.

Anonymity had been demanded by the countless operators throughout Britain who have written, faxed and phoned *CBW* in support of Marksman's call for the vehicle examiners' nit-picking campaign to stop (*CBW*, 12 October).

Throughout this mountain of letters which landed on the editor's desk there were two common threads - they complained about inconsistency and a breakdown in the previously long-standing trust between the VI

and the operators.

Although Mr Oliver's initial reaction was to express surprise that these complaints should have surfaced, when the VI's own customer survey's suggested otherwise, he nevertheless explained strategies in place to rectify the situation.

The VI's £15 million spend on a new computer system will give test stations and roadside vehicle examiners instant access to up-to-the-minute information about the vehicle and its owner - a record that will help target rogue operators as the VI switches away from its controversial prohibition targets to a system that measures improvements in the standard of the UK fleet.

This change of tack is geared to dispense with the main source of operators' grievances. Mr Oliver refuted claims that the VI benefits financially from issuing PG9s. Nor does it gain from clearance of prohibition notices, unless conducted at annual test.

● Full report in *CBW*, 4 January — the first issue of 1997



Ron Oliver: 'surprised' over complaints

t to King's terminal

elopment could force its closure

by Mike Morgan

east London and a new international terminal at St Pancras. Not only will coach access to the area become more difficult as inevitable traffic congestion worsens but arrivals and departures will have to divert away from an area first used in 1908.

St Pancras will have new facilities for coach pick-ups, including National Express services, but, despite intense lobbying of developers and ministers, no alternative arrangements for the King's Cross coach terminal are confirmed, accord-

ing to Katherine Flynn, owner of Transpak, the express operator's London booking office.

Transpak runs the ticket kiosk in Pancras Road and Mrs Flynn says the impact of the CTRL on express coach operators has not been appreciated by planners. She warns that, unless a new terminal is found - possibly on nearby York Way - services will be forced to go elsewhere.

The importance of King's Cross came into focus with coach deregulation in 1981 when the GLC designated Pancras Road as a terminal for new and



Redcrest's Blue Line service is one of six using Pancras Road terminal

expanded express services. However, its history goes back over 80 years with the original coach station site now the home of MacDonald's and a Post Office. Subsequent moves took it to Pentonville Road and Midland Road.

Daily services include: Excelsior to Bournemouth; Whippets to Cambridgeshire; Elseys

to Peterborough and South Lincolnshire; Londonliner, the Bruce-operated National Express route to Scotland; Blue Line to the North East; and, newcomer, Green Express to Leeds and Bradford.

Green Express, is the former Blue Line service taken over from Abbotts of Leeming last month by six-

coach operator A Green (Coaches) Ltd of Walthamstow.

Two return trips run on Friday and Sunday - one trip each way on Saturday and Monday.

Meanwhile, the North East to London Blue Line route has passed to Redcrest of Carlisle using the original timetable.

▼ Coach and Bus

PSVs get clean bill of health

THE Vehicle Inspectorate's clampdown on smoky vehicles has registered a resounding win for PSVs - half as likely to pollute as vans, and much less smoky than cars.

The Confederation of Passenger Transport spent much of the day after the Department of Transport announced the results flying the industry's flag for media callers, and said the news proved what it has always said.

"These figures come as no great surprise," said CPT director general Veronica Palmer.

"Time after time, coaches and buses are found to be cleaner than any other vehicle class.



"YOU GET SOME REALLY SMOKEY VEHICLES THIS TIME OF NIGHT...."

"These surprise spot checks are a fine method of ensuring that all road users, private cars, heavy goods vehicles, taxis and the rest, protect the environment by cutting down emissions. Coaches and buses are leading the way."

The spot checks,

conducted between April and September, revealed taxis as the smokiest vehicles, 13.8 per cent of them failing the test.

Light good vehicles were second-worst, 7.2 per cent attracting a prohibition, HGVs scored 5.6 per cent, cars 5.1 per cent, and PSVs just 3.3 per cent.

▼ Bus

Gas vehicles plan

THE Energy Savings Trust is planning to fast-track gas-powered buses into the UK by placing its own, large orders for purpose-built vehicles.

By 'pooling' operator demand for small numbers of buses into a single order, and putting the order out to tender, it hopes to reduce the unit cost to a level at which more operators will begin running urban services on LPG and CNG.

"We have approved a scheme which, over three years, is designed to establish a supply of gas vehicles for the UK," said transport programme manager Jonathan Murray, at the trust, set up by Government to address environmental issues.

"Eventually, we want to offer a mechanism by which operators can get gas vehicles at reasonable cost."

The premium attached to DAF's purpose-built LPG buses - which EST is supporting during its demonstration (see page 6) can be as much as £20,000, including fuel tanks. CNG buses are at a similar premium. But the EST says it is not ignoring the conversion market.

"It's not only the DAF LPG bus programme," said Mr Murray. "We are looking at the possibility of retrofits and conversions - in fact, gas vehicles at varying levels of complexity. We have 12 demonstrations to raise the profile of gas buses, as a lead-in to procurement groups which will be announced in early 1997."

Mr Murray said the key to integration of gas buses is education and EST is to run regional workshops.



In brief

M77 opened

THE M77 was officially opened last week by Michael Forsyth MP, secretary of state for Scotland. The £53 million, 11-kilometre road, which connects Drumbreck and Malletsheugh south west of Glasgow, is the first stage in the upgrading of the A77 to Kilmarnock.

Parking spots

PARK-and-ride projects will soon provide 30,000 parking spots, says transport consultancy the TAS Partnership. By early 1998, it predicts 31 towns and cities will have a permanent park-and-ride scheme, all using buses. TAS says low-floor buses are increasingly being specified. A report of TAS' findings, *Bus-based Park and Ride in Great Britain*, is available for £30 direct from TAS on 01772 204988.

Green purge

THE Government is to widen the powers of local authorities to allow better control of air pollution hotspots, says Sir George Young, transport secretary. He said moves by Europe to reduce vehicle emissions were not the only answer.

CPT speaker

THE Confederation of Passenger Transport will have Lord Inglewood as a speaker at its annual dinner, on 6 February at the Grosvenor House Hotel, Park Lane.

Lane changes

THE rules for street signs are to change, with the result that many existing bus lanes will open to coaches, says the CPT. Local authorities who want to maintain laning exclusively for service buses will now have to add the words 'Local Buses' to signing. In London, this will effectively make bus laning unavailable to commuter coach set-down where the service is not under an LTB agreement.

▼ Bus

DAF LPG vehicle tour nears

First purpose-built demonstrator is almost complete

by Mark Williams

DAF Bus's first, purpose-built LPG demonstrator is nearing completion at Northern Counties and will be touring the country by February.

The low-floor SB 220GG has revised Paladin body, all-new, dedicated 8.65-litre LPG engine (CBW, 9 November) and roof-mounted gas tanks. With the tax break provided this year by Chancellor Ken Clarke, importer Hughes DAF says operating costs may prove very close to diesel.

"The alternative fuel mode has, in fact, been pushed by successive Budgets," said Bob McLeod, md at Hughes DAF. "It's certainly much closer to zero difference but time will tell. Meanwhile, we are keen to try to invigorate local authorities into providing capital support for operators."

Mr McLeod said 'serious talks' were under way to put LPG buses into operation already and, though the first vehicle is supported by Shell, other LPG suppliers are showing

interest in the project.

There are also suggestions that operators may be able to get additional funding from the Energy Savings Trust on the initial cost (see story, page 5) which, coupled with Quality Partnerships, may break

the ice, said Mr McLeod. Despite having not had type approval, the bus has already been driven.

It was originally engined with diesel while at Northern Counties before being driven to Holland for the conversion.



UK first: DAF Bus SB220 low-floor Paladin uses all-new LPG engine

▼ Bus

Fleetmaster second dealer to become agent for East Lancs

A SECOND dealer whose core business has been used vehicle sales has been appointed southern agent for East Lancashire Coachbuilders' buses.

Fleetmaster Bus & Coach will provide new East Lancs buses, and will take trade-ins, as will Martins (CBW, 14 December). Fleetmaster says it will, nonetheless, be chasing large fleet orders.

"The new Alusuisse-based range of East Lancs bodies is modern and stylish, and uses a well-proven structure which is both robust and durable," said Mark Stephenson, sales director for Fleetmaster, based in Horsham, Sussex. "We will be pursuing fleet business but, for smaller operators, I would stress that we not only provide a personal service but we are also able to accept trade-in," added md Steve Swain.

"East Lancs Sprytes are now as good a low-floor bus as any," he said.

"We have engineers roaming around the country who are in touch with smaller operators.

"They will provide a valuable role in after-sales, and we are hoping to provide a 24-hour service on spares as the business grows."

Mr Swain said stock, at low levels, would be held by Fleetmaster and probably stored at a Midlands base. They will be chiefly Dart SLF Sprytes and Scania low-floors, but double-deck vehicles are a possibility.

Fleetmaster's core business has been second-hand sales, re-engineering of Leyland Nationals, and other specialist engineering, including supplying AZ exhaust catalysts. It will now be offering finance on East Lancs products and a range of major spares.

"The market has changed quite dramatically," said East Lancs sales director Philip Hilton. "The changes will continue for some time to come. We have the right products for the market, and Fleetmaster will play a key role in helping us sell to companies who, in the past, would not have considered buying from East Lancs."



▼ Coach and Bus

New deals from Volvo

AS demand for maintenance lease arrangements grows, Volvo has announced PSV packages pioneered in its truck markets.

Starting in the New Year, Volvo Truck Finance will become Volvo Contract Services, and will be selling a full range of lease and hire facilities, including contract purchase, finance leasing, operating leases, hire and specially-tailored service and maintenance deals.

"This marks the beginning of innovative support programmes for Volvo coach and bus operators, and we will be concentrating on expanding these services even further in the future," said Volvo Contracts md Barrie Cloud.

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EXCEL, THE DETAILS ADD UP

▼ Coach and Bus

Management buy

Thirty-vehicle operation going to three staff

by Mark Williams

RALPHS Coaches of Slough has been bought by its management from the current directors (CBW, 14 December).

The 30-vehicle operation, which operates Stansted Airport car park and the shuttle buses, plus substantial private hire, will be going to three of its staff — finance manager Roy Aylen, Stansted manager John Rutt and accounts manager Joan Cook.

Mr Aylen will become managing director, Mr Rutt operations director, and Mrs Cook sales director.

They displace private

hire director Keith Myers, director Bernie Pritchard, and current md Pat Burke, though Mr Burke is being retained short-term as a consultant.

"The existing directors wanted to put Ralph's on the market," explained Mr Rutt. "It seemed too good an opportunity to miss. The markets the company operates in are good, and we will be taking things forward... there's work to be had."

One of Ralphs' first moves will be to order five Plaxton Premieres on

Volvo B10M and sell F-registered vehicles: "Our oldest vehicles will then be K registered," said Mr Rutt. "There is some emphasis on young vehicles within the incoming market."

The current business, which was established in 1973, is underpinned with the Stansted contract - which employs 40 people - and

'Peaks' live

established in 1973, is underpinned with the Stansted contract - which employs 40 people - and



▼ Coach

Operator confidence sky high

BUSINESS confidence among coach operators is sky high, according to an end-of-year report by top opinion poll gurus, NOP.

Fleet sizes grew in 1996 and are expected to grow again in 1997; real growth is believed to be in the UK, not Continental Europe; and, with 92 per cent of operators planning

vehicle replacement in advance and 40 per cent of operators having acquired vehicles in the last three months, buoyancy in the new and used coach market is predicted to continue.

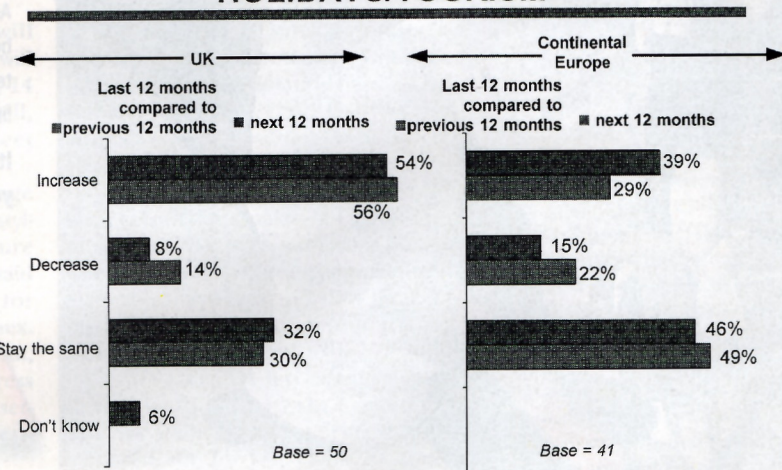
NOP was commissioned by finance house, Lombard Business, to establish trends in the

coach business.

It surveyed 100 finance directors selected at random from a cross-section of coach companies with turnover in excess of £100,000. Average fleet size was 17 vehicles.

The already high level of finance house dependency will increase and the report confirms

COACH TRANSPORT ACTIVITY FOR HOLIDAYS/TOURISM



Lombard Business

NOP Corporate and Financial

NoP survey points to growth in United Kingdom, not Continental Europe

Regional Round-up



▼ Staffordshire

MRN charter

MIDLAND Red North has introduced a customer charter on its newly-branded XL routes 25 and 26 into Cannock — with free tickets should standards fail to be met.

The charter makes commitments on bus timing, customer care, cleanliness and timetabling, with MRN having new buses and one-route crews to maintain standards.

The XL services, linking Pye Green, Hednesford and Chads Moor with Cannock town centre, have a five-minute day-long frequency.

▼ London

Theatre trip

CHILDREN at Great Ormond Street Hospital were treated by Metroline's Cricklewood Bus Garage to a theatre trip.

They saw Oxford Street's Christmas lights and enjoyed a performance of Starlight Express - with the help of Apollo Victoria's staff - before going back to their wards on a Metroline vehicle.

▼ Nottingham

Minister visits

SECRETARY of State for Transport Sir George Young travelled on award-winning council bus route the Cotgrave Connection and saw the electronic 'Nextbus' real-time bus stops. Cotgrave Connection, run in a Quality Partnership with Barton Buses, has won a Charter Mark.

▼ London

Lane cameras

DIGITAL cameras mounted on buses and on the roadside will be intro-

duced to enforce bus lanes in London from March next year.

The Manchester-made cameras never run out of 'film', and transmit their pictures back to a base station, where vehicles whose registrations are not in the London Transport database are singled out for action.

▼ Kent

Project ends

KENT County Council's Maidstone Initiative for Sustainable Transport project ends in February after three years. MIST introduced new bus laning on the A20; park-and-ride schemes; 'helping hand' staff on buses; and low-sulphur fuel for all its dedicated vehicles. Assessment of MIST's achievements is under way.

▼ Merseyside

Station opens

MERSEYTRAVEL's new £1.5 million central bus station in Claughton Road, Birkenhead, has just opened.

The project, part-funded by the European Regional Development Fund and designed by Cass Associates, uses glass and skylights to lighten the passenger areas, security from CCTV, and electronic bus information.

▼ Essex

Arson theory

ARSONISTS are being blamed for a fire which destroyed two of Eastern National's Clacton open-toppers and damaged a 1939 Bristol K double-deck. Firefighters described the blaze at Walton on the Naze as "an inferno" but managed to save the Bristol from destruction.

Ralphs Coaches



...y will go on to five Premieres on order for the new year contracts around Heathrow. "That will continue to be our bread and butter," said Mr Rutt. The fleet is a mix of Van Hool and Plaxton bodywork, mostly on Volvo, plus six Deltas on Stansted work and five Caetano Optimo 18 seaters.

h - report

that coach acquisition is driven by vehicle age and seasonality.

Operators say new seatbelt regulations are having limited impact on acquisition plans but environmental issues and air-conditioning are significant factors.

Few will be surprised that the motorway outside lane ban is having a massive impact on scheduling reliability and driver stress levels, with 64 per cent of operators are calling for a statutory minimum speed limit for cars on motorways.

Fast increases in fuel costs are expected; coach transport is expected to increase over the next three years at the expense of rail; services dedicated to the disabled are likely to remain a niche.

Coach holidays and tourism look set for growth say the operators, with over 50 per cent experiencing and expecting growth in the UK but less than 30 per cent expecting growth in Continental Europe (see chart - left).

▼ Coach and Bus

DSA guide to theory test

THE Driving Standards Agency has published its guide to theory test questions, and says coach and bus drivers will need to score 21 out of a possible 25 for the new test.

The test begins on 2 January, and the Driving Standards Agency has been criticised for having failed to produce vital theory test guidance in time for training schools to use it (CBW, 30 November). It says topic lists relating to the theory tests should have been adequate, and were sent to training organisations several months ago.

Sample questions examine students on drivers' hours, tachograph use, bridge heights, vehicle weight, the safety and comfort of passengers and on vehicle driving characteristics. The DSA says the pass mark has been arrived at after consultation with the National Foundation for Educational Research.

In sample multiple choice questions sent to CBW, one reads: "Who's responsible for the issue of tachograph charts to a PCV driver?" and offers the options of The Department of Transport, the driver's employer, authorised calibration centre, and local MoT testing station. Another asks the maximum vehicle weight allowed in a motorway overtaking lane.



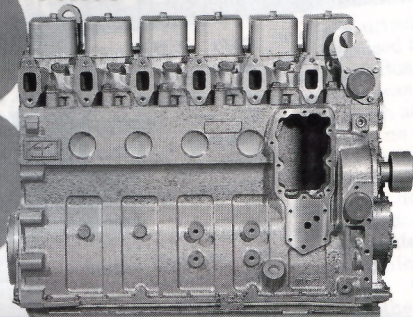
SHORT ENGINES

We've come up with the Short Answer.

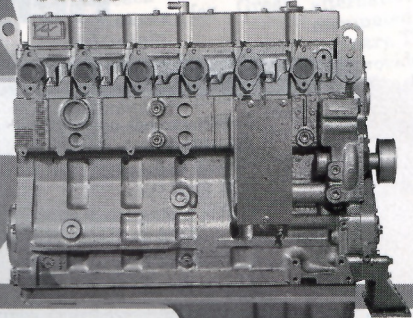
Our new Short Engine range combines the factory remanufactured 'heart' of an engine with the specification flexibility and lower repair costs required today by operators of mixed Cummins powered equipment. Short Engines are available ex-stock with a full one year warranty for maximum up-time and peace of mind.

Full details available from your local Cummins stockist.

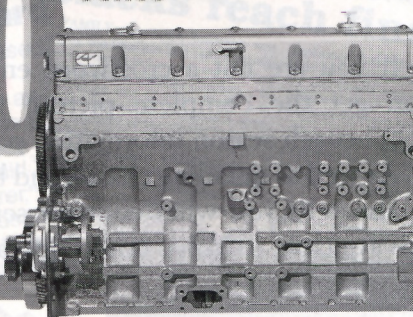
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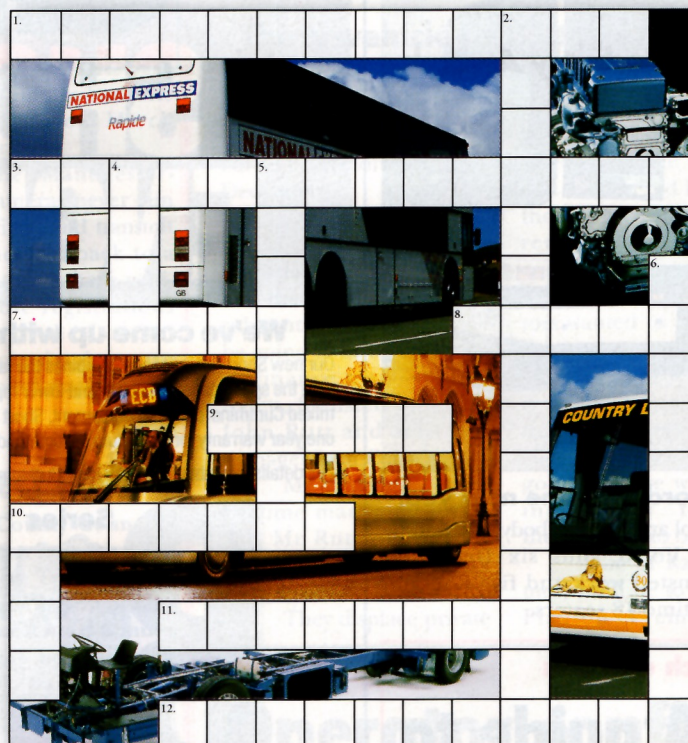


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Puzzling over your investment options for the new season?



Here are some clues.

ACROSS	DOWN
1. Someone to talk to when buying (5,8) 3. Available funding choices (7,7) 7. & 9. Of great importance, particularly when you come to trade in (6,5) 8. Market leading coach chassis (5) 10. (across & down) & 11 Plaxton, Van Hool, Jonckheere, Berkhof and Salvador Caetano are all these (4,7,8) 12. Always there (11)	2. Only with Volvo, is it so extensive (6,2,7) 4. It's good at all four points of the compass (4) 5. Dealer Support? This well spread takes time! (8) 6. Long term pledge (10) 10. See 10 across

If you are not a crossword enthusiast, you can get the complete picture from Volvo's 1997 coach season information pack.

As well as detailing chassis and body options, it also tells you what contract service options are available to Volvo coach operators.

It explains exactly what you get when you invest in a Volvo coach and the support you can expect from the Volvo dealer network.

Just in case you do not receive your copy in the post, you can call free on 0800 715716 anywhere in the U.K. to reserve your own copy.

Volvo. Your solution for the 1997 Coach Season.

VOLVO



What the papers said...

IT'S the sort of publicity money can't buy... but a coach industry award has given *CBW* readers a well deserved boost.

Operators like Diamond & Glantawe, Bennetts of Newbury, and Hookways made the

Coach Industry Awards success brings media exposure

by Mark Williams

most of their awards by dropping a line to local newspapers, and soon had reporters on the phone.

And it wasn't just the winners. Runners-

up in the Marketing Campaign category, Ellen Smith Tours, was determined to broadcast the achievement. Its

near miss made the Lancashire Evening Telegraph.

Rotherham-based Tour Wholesaler of the Year Botel got itself exposure in the Barnsley

Star, including a quote from md Kevin Baum. And Derbyshire papers ran a short advertising feature on Slacks of Matlock, runners-up in the Coach Operator of the Year category for two years running. **CBW**



Coach firm success
COACH operator **Ellen Smith Tours** of Rossendale received a big surprise from TV star Tom O'Connor.
The comedian was host at the national Coach Industry Awards when the company came runner-up in the "Marketing Campaign of the Year" category.
Its campaign was based on the company's "Elite Tours," which has been a great success since its launch earlier this year.
Commercial director Paul Mason said: "We can hold our heads up high and say we are one of the biggest names in the industry."

Slacks reach the finals
ADVERTISING FEATURE
A FAMILY run coach business was among the finalists in a recent prestigious national industry competition.
Slacks Coaches, run by **Graham** and Dorothy Slack, was among four finalists in the coach operators category of the Coach Industry Awards for Great Britain.
For the company which has been running for nearly fifty years, it was a case of deja-vu, as they finished finalists last year. Now next year they are hoping for a hat-trick!
Transport manager **Sid Harbey** said: "We are absolutely delighted at the result. To even be nominated is a great achievement. Hopefully we will have another go next year."

Award surprise for coach firm
BENNETT'S Coaches, of Chichester, are "modestly pleased" with their first-time success in a national coach competition.
The 12-year-old coach company, run by Mr Dick Bennett and his wife Mary, was runner-up for its smart green paintwork in the coach livery of the year awards, and also in the coach brochure of the year award coming ahead of one of market leaders, Wal Arnold.
The results of the national contest, run by Coach & Wickersley-based Botel Services Ltd, were chosen as Coach Tourism Council Wholesaler of the Year at the annual Coach Industry Awards.
The firm which employs 13 people, most of whom are from the Centre on Saturday Rotherham area, arranges hotel accommodation in Europe and ferry space for tour operators, travel agencies and coach operators all over the UK.
The awards follow the company's successful venture into airtours this year, and its receipt of its own ATOL licence. Now one of the largest family-owned coach operators in Britain, Mr Bennett felt that the recent developments were very positive for the workforce.

Holiday firm scoops top coach award
A ROTHERHAM travel firm has scooped a top award in the Coach Industry Awards.
The firm which employs 13 people, most of whom are from the Centre on Saturday Rotherham area, arranges hotel accommodation in Europe and ferry space for tour operators, travel agencies and coach operators all over the UK.
The awards follow the company's successful venture into airtours this year, and its receipt of its own ATOL licence. Now one of the largest family-owned coach operators in Britain, Mr Bennett felt that the recent developments were very positive for the workforce.

Coach firm's award
ROKEHAMPTON and Exeter-based coach company **Hookways** Holidays has won a national award at the Coach Industry Awards for providing holidays for the less bodied. Charlie Hookway said: "Everybody here works extremely hard to provide the best possible service and it really helps to know that your efforts are recognised by others in the industry."

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Transport manager **Sid Harbey** said: "We are absolutely delighted at the result. To even be nominated is a great achievement. Hopefully we will have another go next year."

The companies can enter themselves or alternatively are nominated by the industry. The awards are provided by support from the industry.

Winners and finalists - let us know how you are marketing your success in this year's Coach Industry Awards

▼ UK

VIP deals at travel showcase

COACH operators can treat group organisers to a free, VIP day out to coincide with the 1997 Great Days Out Fair, the north's leading trade exhibition.

The Great Days Out Fair is organised by the North West Tourist Board and is being held at the International Community Centre, Wigan, on Saturday 8 March. This year's event was also held at Wigan and attracted 2,100 visitors, making it the leading such event in the north. To cope with extra demand in 1997, the number of stands at the ICC has been increased to 140.

The fair focuses on day trips products for coach operators, group organisers and teachers. Many exhibitors are developing specific educational products linked to the National Curriculum and supported by dedicated education officers.

The VIP package includes a morning visit to one of four attractions - Oswaldtwistle Mills, Quarry Bank Mill, Wigan Pier or High Legh Garden Centre/Arley Hall, near Knutsford.

After lunch, groups qualify for express registration, priority setting-down



In the bag: Nick Brook-Sykes (left) and Eric Ransomme, of Arley Hall, preparing a Great Days Out Fair VIP package for operators

and parking at the Great Days Out Fair.

The package was introduced at this year's fair and proved a hit with operators.

Chris Pratt, of McCarthy's Coaches, in Macclesfield, said: "This year's fair was a tremendous success with a really good range of attractions to see. We also found the tourist board's VIP package was too good to miss. Hosting our own customers was an excellent public relations exercise."

Nick Brooks-Sykes, head of marketing at the

North West Tourist Board, said: "The fair really moved into the premier league this year. Attendance figures exceeded our every expectation and we anticipate that 1997 will break these records."

Operators wanting more details about VIP packages should contact Eleanor Muirhead, of Marketing Matters, on 01925 752078. Further information about the Great Days Out Fair is available from David Hinchon, at the North West Tourist Board, on 01942 821222.

▼ UK and Europe

Record year

EAST Yorkshire Travel, the Hull-based coach operator, has marked a record year by reaching its target of 100,000 customers before the end of 1996.

It reflects a period of remarkable growth for the EYMS group subsidiary, which carried a mere 8,000 customers four years ago. East Yorkshire Travel, which runs a fleet of more than 50 coaches, believes the total makes it

EYT in big league

the third largest coach and holiday tour operator in England.

Managing director Graham Rogers said: "I am especially pleased we have achieved our target of 100,000 passengers in 1996 because we knew it was going to be a tough one."

"We specialise in short breaks and have

▼ UK

Shearings buys and

STRONG demand for traditional seaside holidays this year has prompted Shearings Holidays to buy another hotel in the Welsh resort of Llandudno.

Shearings has bought the 49-room Regent Court Hotel for an undisclosed sum. The property is adjacent to the Marine Hotel, which the operator purchased in March. Shearings has been granted planning permission to link the two hotels to create a 131-bedroom property, accommodating up to 250 guests.

The enlarged property, which will trade as the Marine Hotel, will operate on a 49-week season and is

expected to attract around 12,000 holidaymakers a year. It will be one of the biggest hotels in Llandudno and the second largest in Shearings' hotel portfolio.

Both hotels will close for 10 weeks over Winter for an £800,000 development and refurbishment programme.

A new entertainment venue, licensed for 220 people, will be created and all the bedrooms and public areas refurbished in time for the hotel to reopen at Easter.

Purchasing the Regent Court underlines Shearings' commitment to develop its hotel portfolio

▼ UK

North's new attractions will hit the right note

A NEW improved layout, with exhibitors grouped geographically, should make it easier for operators to do business at the 1997 British Travel Trade Fair.

The English regions will be grouped as the North, Central and Eastern, South and London.

The North of England, covering Northumbria, Cumbria, the North West and Yorkshire, promises to be a very busy part of the

exhibition. The Northumbria Tourist Board will have news of the National Glass Centre, a £16 million attraction opening in Sunderland in June 1998. It will be the first of its kind, incorporating working factories and exhibition galleries.

Darlington and Carlisle will be among the towns and cities promoting themselves to coach groups, while the Hadrian's Wall Partnership is launching a

new group travel pack highlighting lesser-known sites. In the Lake District, staff at Windermere's Lakeside Aquarium will have details of the attraction opening next May.

On the Sheffield stand, the travel trade will get a preview of the National Centre for Popular Music, a £15 million attraction opening in 1998. Merseyside Tourism will also hit the right note with details of

events to mark the 40th anniversary of the Cavern Club, in Liverpool.

And Blackpool Pleasure Beach will give the low-down on Space Shot, a high-rise ride opening in the Spring.

● **British Travel Trade Fair 1997 is on Wednesday and Thursday, 19 and 20 March, in Hall 9 at the NEC, Birmingham. Operators will be able to pre-register from January.**

BRITISH TRAVEL TRADE FAIR

19-20 MARCH 1997
NEC BIRMINGHAM

r for coach travel

hits its target of 100,000 passengers

by William Golden

been delighted by the response to our tour programme. Even holidays in the late Autumn and early Spring - traditional 'lean periods' in the British market - have proved successful.

"Having inherited many of its coaches from the operators purchased

during the last year or two, East Yorkshire Travel is busily upgrading much of its fleet with modern coaches. It now intends to set itself an even tougher target for 1997."

Much of the build-up has come from East Yorkshire Travel's traditional area centred on Hull and East Yorkshire, but the total includes the

result of a full year's operation at the company's Teesside base in Stockton-on-Tees, together with a smaller number of passengers from recent operations based on Tyneside and Manchester.

Both recent operations were started after acquisition of an existing operator, the latest being the acquisition of Charterplan from Stagecoach Manchester.

ther hotel

in key UK resorts. Vince Flower, hotel operations director, said: "The decision to buy the Regent Court was heavily influenced by the strong Summer demand for holidays at the Marine.

"Such a demand confirms that, when managed and marketed well, there is still great potential in the traditional British seaside.

"Our policy of extending the hotel estate in popular resorts is reaping dividends, allowing us not only to exert great control over the holiday product and protect Shearings' brand values, but also to secure improved margins."



Expanding: Easter opening for Marine Hotel

Cross-Channel traffic

November 1996

	Coaches	Market Share	+/- November 1995
Dover	9,357	63.6%	+7.7%
Ramsgate	632	4.3%	-1.7%
Le Shuttle	4,722	32.1%	-6%

January to November 1996

	Coaches	Market Share	+/- January to November 1995
Dover	133,005	64.5%	-0.1%
Ramsgate	15,128	7.3%	-0.3%
Le Shuttle	57,971	28.2%	+0.4%

Europe

Cheer for Le Shuttle

NEARLY 5,000 coaches were carried by Le Shuttle in November before the service was stopped in its tracks by the tunnel fire.

Traffic-flow figures show that, even though it was out of action for the last two weeks of the month, Le Shuttle carried 4,722 coaches - 32.1 per cent of the market.

Coach services on Le Shuttle are scheduled to recommence on Monday 6 January, giving the ferry companies a free run of almost seven weeks.

A total of 9,357 coaches travelled through Dover in November, a 28.1 per cent increase on November 1995, when

7,308 coaches used the port. The figure is 2,000 vehicles down on October 1996, underlining reports from some operators that groups preferred to cancel and rebook on Le Shuttle, rather than switch to the ferries.

Nevertheless, P&O European Ferries and Stena Line have added sailings to cope with extra demand. P&O has extended until the end of March the 24-hour Bonanza Excursion Fare to 36 hours on the Dover-Calais crossing. The 24-hour fare is still available on the Portsmouth-Cherbourg/Le Havre routes until the end of March.

CBW

Eurowatch

WEATHER

City	Average temperature last week	City	Average temperature last week
Amsterdam	0C/32F	Madrid	6C/43F
Athens	12C/54F	Oslo	1F/34F
Berlin	1C/34F	Paris	0C/32F
Brussels	0C/32F	Rome	13C/55F
Dublin	7C/45F	Stockholm	5C/41F
Lisbon	12C/54F	Vienna	1C/34F
Luxembourg	-2C/28F	Zurich	0/32F

DIESEL PRICES

Country	Diesel price per litre in Sterling	Country	Diesel price per litre in Sterling
Austria	0.56	Luxembourg	0.43
Belgium	0.56	Netherlands	0.55
Eire	0.54	Norway	0.72
France	0.52	Portugal	0.46
Germany	0.50	Spain	0.48
Greece	0.42	Sweden	0.65
Italy	0.61	Switzerland	0.64

(Courtesy AA Roadwatch)

HOLIDAY POUND

Country	Currency exchange rate	Country	Currency exchange rate
Austria	17.60Sch/£	Italy	2,488 Lire/£
Belgium	51.50 BFr/£	Netherlands	2.81 Gld/£
Denmark	9.61 K/£	Norway	10.47 NKr/£
Eire	0.97 Punt/£	Portugal	253.75 Es/£
France	8.43 F/£	Spain	210.50 Pta/£
Germany	2.50 DM/£	Sweden	11.17 SKr/£
Greece	397 D/£	Switzerland	2.13 SFr/£

▼ **Maintenance**

Severe warning given to Venture

VENTURE Travel has been given a severe warning about its future maintenance standards by South Wales traffic commissioner John Mervyn Pugh.

Raymond Hart and Alan Grisedale, trading as Venture Travel, of Watford Road, Off Newport Road, Cardiff, South Glamorgan, appeared at a Cardiff disciplinary inquiry after the issue of a prohibition for an inoperative brake endorsed as showing a significant maintenance failure on one of their vehicles.

They hold a licence for 10 single deckers and seven double deckers. For the firm, Geoffrey Jones said the partners accepted they had fallen below acceptable levels in regard to the maintenance of their vehicles and below the standards they had set themselves.

They began to attack the problem in September, beginning with putting their 17-vehicle fleet through fresh MoT tests. All but two of the vehicles had now been through and passed fresh tests. One of the problems had been drivers had not been reporting defects as there had not been a proper driver-defect reporting system in place, said Mr Jones.

That had now been remedied and all the drivers now handed in a daily reporting log. A further problem had been that

the flow chart setting out the forthcoming inspection dates had not been kept up to date. That also had now been corrected.

As far as the vehicle found with the defective brake was concerned, that had been an area of dispute with the driver, said Mr Jones. Though the prohibition had been marked for possible prosecution action, so far no papers had been served on the firm.

The partners realised it had been a serious incident and that it had arisen through the lack of a proper defect reporting system. Mr Grisedale said that 13 of the 17 vehicles were used on school contracts. There was one prosecution outstanding against a driver who was alleged to have taken less than the legally required amount of rest.

Accepting there had been a slip up, Mr Grisedale said they had been very busy and there had been a lapse. Issuing a severe warning, Mr Pugh said he wanted any vehicle tested before the beginning of December to be put through fresh MoT tests, so the firm would be starting with vehicles in A1 condition.

He warned of the consequences of any further prohibitions that gave rise to concern, saying there were no second chances under the continuous licensing system.



Venture's Alan Grisedale and Ray Hart accepted lapse

▼ **Tribunal**

Black woman wins discrimination

Tribunal orders GM Buses (North) Ltd to

by Michael Jewell

GM BUSES (North) Ltd has been ordered to pay a black woman bus driver £18,591 compensation, which includes £1,000 for injured feelings, after her claims of unfair dismissal and racial discrimination were upheld at a Manchester Industrial Tribunal.

Initially, Cynthia Reid, of Newbrook Road, Over Hulton, Bolton, Lancashire, had her claims rejected but, on appeal, the Industrial

Appeals Tribunal directed that her case be remitted to another industrial tribunal for further consideration. For Mrs Reid, who had 14 years service with the company, it was argued that the incident which had led to her dismissal, alleged abuse to a passenger, was not serious enough to merit dismissal.

Mrs Reid said she had made a series of complaints about being the

▼ **Maintenance**

Commissioner orders review

NORTH Eastern traffic commissioner Keith Waterworth has directed that the financial position, and the maintenance record, of operator John Cousins be reviewed in six to nine months. Mr Cousins, who trades as Cousins II Est 1995, of 59A Swinside Drive, Belmont, County Durham, appeared at a Leeds disciplinary inquiry because of concern about his financial situation and maintenance record.

A previous licence held by Mr Cousins was revoked in January 1995 on maintenance grounds but, in August of the same year, he won a fresh two-vehicle O-licence. When granting that licence for a one-year trial period, Mr Waterworth said Mr Cousins had to start at the bottom again and prove he could act responsibly and competently. He would not accept any lame excuses for failures to keep promises made in future. If Mr Cousins fell down in any significant way, he would have no hesitation in removing him permanently from the industry.

DoT vehicle examiner Gordon Whittaker said that, since then, an immediate prohibition notice had been imposed on one of Mr Cousins's vehicles. An examination of the maintenance records showed them not to be entirely satisfactory. Giving a number of undertakings on maintenance improvements, Mr Cousins said he had found Mr Whittaker most helpful in offering advice. Financial evidence was heard in private at Mr Cousins's request. Mr Waterworth issued Mr Cousins with a formal written warning.

▼ **Licensing**

Hawthorn gets the OK

HAWTHORN Travel Ltd, a company formed to take over the business run in the same name by Nigel Martlew, was granted an O-licence at a Cardiff public inquiry before South Wales traffic commissioner John Mervyn Pugh.

The company, of Gwalia Buildings, Powell Duffryn Way, No 1 Dock, Barry, South Glamorgan, had applied for a new international licence for one minibus and 23 single deckers. Mr Martlew said he wanted more resources to go forward in the industry and, as a sole trader, he had some difficulties.

He said it was possible his bank "driving him" had made him think of forming a limited company. The existing fleet of Hawthorn Travel would be transferred into the new company, though it was his intention to eventually reduce the number of vehicles. Granting the licence, Mr Pugh said: "It is nice to have good operators like you."

bus driver action case

ay her £18,591 compensation

subject of racial abuse which the company had failed to investigate to her satisfaction. She maintained she had been the subject of discrimination in relation to her dismissal and the subsequent decisions to reject her two appeals against that decision. The company denied any discrimination or that Mrs Reid had been unfairly dismissed. The tribunal was told she had a long and detailed disciplinary history. It was argued that, in view of that back-

ground, the decision to dismiss her had been a reasonable one.

In upholding Mrs Reid's claims, though finding she was 60 per cent to blame for her own dismissal, the tribunal said it appeared she had never been offered any form of remedial or cor-



GMBN: denied any discrimination or that driver had been unfairly sacked

rective training, or any other form of training, that would seek to alleviate the obvious difficulties she had in carrying out her job properly.

▼ Maintenance

Licence suspension for school bus operator



SCHOOL bus operator Stephen Heath, whose bid for a licence in the Eastern Traffic Area was turned down in July by Eastern Traffic commissioner Brigadier Compton Boyd, has had the existing licence he holds in the West Midlands Traffic Area suspended until both his operational vehicles have passed fresh MoT tests.

Mr Heath, who trades as Omega Travel, of 26 Tower Road, Earl Shilton, Leicester, and who holds a licence to operate four vehicles based at 37 Watling Street, Warwickshire, appeared before West Midlands traffic commissioner John Mervyn Pugh at a Birmingham disciplinary inquiry.

Mr Pugh said Mr Heath's application for a licence in the Eastern Area had been refused because Brigadier Boyd had not been satisfied about his maintenance arrangements or the explanations for two prohibition notices marked as showing a significant maintenance failure imposed on Mr Heath's

vehicles.

Mr Heath said he still wanted to leave the West Midlands. His father had sold his yard and he was unable to maintain his vehicles at the site he now had in the West Midlands.

Mr Pugh asked how he could allow Mr Heath to continue on the road when he was dealing with exactly the same evidence as that before Brigadier Boyd, but Mr Heath said he had cut the number of vehicles down to two.

Most of his work was for Leicestershire County Council and they had allowed him to hand some of the work back without penalising him. When the vehicle examiner had visited him he had been satisfied with the condition of the vehicles but there had been a few problems with the paperwork.

Admitting he had not put his vehicles through fresh MoT tests, as had been suggested in the letter calling him to the inquiry, Mr Heath said he drove one vehicle himself, he had run out of time, and the vehicle examiner

had been satisfied with their condition.

Mr Pugh said that would have sounded fine if there had been a fatal accident but Mr Heath said he could only assure the commissioner he was trying his best. He would put his vehicles through fresh MoT tests straight away and then again every month if that was required.

He did not know what more he could do. Asked why he had failed to keep to undertakings given when the licence was granted, Mr Heath said he had been trying to do too much — driving, trying to obtain new business and repairing the vehicles. He agreed he had been advised to write to his drivers pointing out their responsibilities and he had not done so.

Mr Pugh said it seemed Mr Heath had done nothing since July apart from reducing the number of vehicles, and he was very close to leaving the industry altogether. Mr Heath agreed that, in October, the vehicle examiner had said there were

eight vehicles in the yard. He said there were still eight vehicles there but they now had signs on them saying they were off the road. The vehicles he had on the road before had been okay.

The problem had been a vehicle he'd only had for three days and which he had thought was in good condition.

He had another vehicle checked the same day and the vehicle examiner had remarked on its good condition. Another vehicle was checked at Scarborough in August without any problems.

Mr Pugh said Mr Heath had told Brigadier Boyd he had relied upon others, that he was changing his maintenance contractor and that he was going to stop driving so he could watch his drivers doing their checks.

He had not done those things and he was still driving. Mr Heath said that had been when he was operating four vehicles. He was now down to two vehicles and things were running a lot smoother.

He sometimes worked through the night to ensure vehicles were safe to go out the following morning. He had never had any problems until he moved from his father's yard.

None of his vehicles had ever been found to be unsafe on the road. None of the prohibited vehicles had been carrying passengers, and the one on the road had only been moved 100 yards to enable a lorry to enter the industrial estate.

Suspending the licence, reducing the authorisation to two vehicles, and specifying the two vehicles to be operated, Mr Pugh said he did not think Mr Heath was a bad operator. He thought he'd had too much on his plate and had not understood the seriousness of operator licensing.

Mr Heath said he thought he had been very lucky and Mr Pugh warned that, if he collected any more prohibitions endorsed 'S' Mr Heath could forget about continuing as an operator.

CSW

Unsung heroes

RECRUITMENT of good coach drivers is getting more and more difficult. Many operators in London and the South East have been forced to provide week-day accommodation for drivers whose homes and families are 200 or more miles away. I gather that hauliers are even recruiting drivers on this sort of basis from Eastern Europe. I have yet to hear of recruitment from that distance happening in our industry, but it could come.

Accordingly, in thinking about recruitment for the New Year I wondered what I could do to best attract the sort of drivers I need. I remembered the good advice I had been given many years ago: when contemplating recruitment consider exactly what skills and attributes are required for the particular job and the appropriate job title - and then draft any advertisement accordingly.

When one engages in this exercise (just start with a blank piece of paper if you care to try it for yourself) one quickly discovers that there are many skills and attributes required that are almost, or equally, as important as the mere qualification to drive a coach.

Today we expect far, far more from a coach driver than we did not so very many years ago. There are more duties connected directly with what are now far more complex vehicles - doing quite detailed walk-round checks being but one of these responsibilities. Dealing with passen-



gers has also evolved. Here, too, the range is wide: from the behavioural problems of children through to the duty to attempt to secure solutions to passengers' allegations of short-

comings in package tours.

Tact, diplomacy, knowledge and possibly linguistic skills are all needed to deal with the increasing burden of officialdom that accosts drivers daily.

What all of this points to - for me at least - is the conclusion that the very designation 'coach driver' has become a misnomer. The job has grown apace to something much more broadly based.

These people are really Coach Passenger Management Executives. This is not just a trite euphemism - like 'Household Management Executive' (which I understand is the politically correct, non-sexist, term for housewife).

Think about each word and its meaning: Coach Passenger Management Executive - isn't that what we are now wanting our coach drivers to be?

The outcome of all this thinking is the draft advertisement (left). Although it unquestionably contains rather more than some small grains of truth, something tells me that, when I have recovered from the bottled Good Will to All Men, I may want to tone it down a shade!

● Many thanks to all who have written to me - whether with questions, support or criticism. I hope that during the year I have provided some assistance, generated some debate and done something to increase profitability. Enjoy a pleasant Christmas and let's look forward to a Prosperous New Year.



COACH PASSENGER MANAGEMENT EXECUTIVES

If you possess a PCV driving licence you could join our team of Coach Passenger Management Executives, enjoying a challenging variety of work, from taking pupils to school to extended tours of Europe. Coach washing, cleaning, scrubbing and bus service operation will enliven this job, for which there are no fixed, or even normal, hours of work. The principal working environment is a non-smoking area.

The successful candidates will:

Be multi-lingual and accomplished public speakers with at least an A level in history and geography and able to converse intelligently on all current affairs. (Own access to maps, guide books and computer-based information preferable).

Able to drive by the shortest, or most scenic, route to any point in Europe (even without having been there before and with minimal information).

Have wide knowledge of the law - especially in road transport, driving hours and package travel.

Demonstrate an ability to communicate effectively, in any part of Europe, with officials, hoteliers and others as necessary to resolve intractable problems connected with your own work or conduct, the coach, or the fulfilment of passengers' dreams.

Display advanced social skills in dealing with passengers, yet have the muscular ability to repeatedly handle large amounts of bulky luggage without damaging it. (The ability to do the latter without personal injury will be advantageous - no training will be given).

Have sufficient mechanical appreciation to do walk-round checks and assess vehicle roadworthiness.

Have at least full diagnostic skills over a wide range of PCVs. (The ability to effect roadside repairs, secure replacement transport and placate irate passengers will be a distinct advantage).

Have a good sense of humour and be self-motivated (but excesses of either subject to discipline).

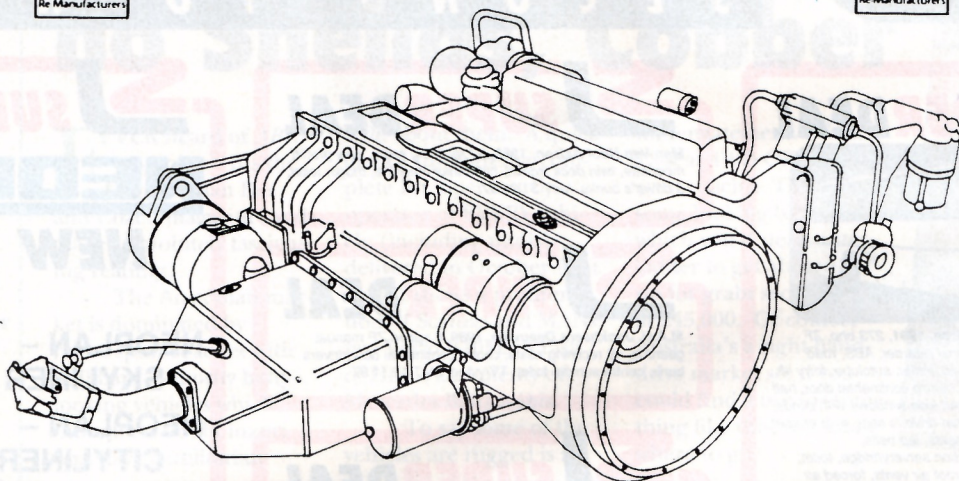
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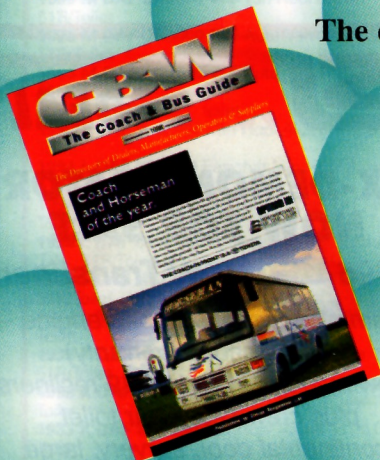
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Volvo B10M Mk III Van Hool Alizee, 1991, 273 bhp, ZF HP5000 automatic gearbox, internal retarder, ABS, road speed governor, variable top speed limiter, autolube, ferry lift, kneel facility, plug entrance door, centre continental door, half rear emergency exit, double glazed side windows with blinds, rear screen curtains, Ishringhausen driver's seat, courier seat, crew compartment, 49 reclining seats, lap belts, brown/orange moquette, mid section servery/fridge, toilet, Radiomobile radio/PA system, 2 roof air vents, forced air ventilation. Choice of 10" - 6 only remaining brown/orange, repainted white 2 pack. Variable MoTs.

SJ SUPERDEAL

VOLVO B10M PLAXTON EXCALIBUR, 1992 (J), 44 reclining seats, blue moquette, fitted kitchen, store cupboard, aircraft lockers, foot rests, radio/PA cassette. MoT 01.02.97

SJ SUPERDEAL

VOLVO B10M PLAXTON EXCALIBUR, 1992 (J), 44 reclining seats, blue moquette, fitted kitchen, aircraft lockers, radio/PA cassette. MoT 01.10.97

SJ SUPERDEAL

Leyland Tiger L10, 1989, Alexander service bus bodies, Cummins L10 ZF automatic, 55 seats & 24 standees, painted white. MoT 30.08.97.

SJ SUPERDEAL



Setra Tornado 215 HD 1992, Man engine, ZF 7 speed gearbox, Voith retarder, 49 reclining seats & courier seat, centre sunken toilet with continental door, Webasto heating, Sutrak air conditioning, servery unit with water boiler, front mounted fridge, radio/PA cassette system, 2 TV monitors and video, drivers bunk, drivers door with wardrobe and central locking, retrimmed and repainted white. MoT 06.12.96.

SJ SUPERDEAL

Man Van Hool Astron, 1983, 57 reclining seats, new graffiti moquette, twin deck videos, hot drinks machine, fridge, toilet, 3 driver's bunks. MoT 31.01.97

SJ SUPERDEAL

M.A.N. Jonckheere Deauville, 1989, 6 speed ZF manual gearbox, 49 reclining seats, centre continental door, drivers bunk, centre sunken toilet, TV/video, MoT 12.11.97

SJ SUPERDEAL

Toyota Caetano Optimo II, 1990, 18 seats plus courier, manual gearbox, power door, radio/PA cassette, livery white, maroon seats, red curtains. New MoT.

SJ SUPERDEAL

Dennis 290 GX Plaxton Premiere, 1993, 49 reclining seats, courier seat, ZF 6 speed gearbox, toilet, fridge, servery, air conditioning, double glazing, fold down tables, lap type seat belts, curtains, seat back nets, aircraft lockers, 3 x TV monitors. MoT 11.04.97

SJ SUPERDEAL

Volvo B10M Plaxton Paramount 3500, 1984 (PP), 6 speed ZF gearbox, 49 reclining seats, rear continental door, power door, toilet, radio/PA/cassette, TV/video, drinks, fridge. MoT 25.5.97

SJ SUPERDEAL



Volvo B12R Jonckheere, 1994 71 reclining seats with seat belts, double glazed, continental door, Telma, auxiliary heater, air conditioning, power door, toilet, radio/pa/cassette, TV/video, drinks, fridge, alloy wheels, fully carpeted. MoT 06.08.97

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Blue Buses in Brighton, red faces in the office

THE doubting Thomases in the office who scoffed at a press release from Brighton Blue Buses, claiming its low-floor, 49 route had become an attraction for visiting bus companies, laughed the other side of their face when Solent Blue Line confirmed the story.

The Southampton operator - which has a passion for midibuses - went along the coast to see the Dart SLFs in action. Managing director Ken Pond was impressed. Can Dennis expect an order from Southern Vectis any day...?

Aussie vehicles are no Sheilas, Cobber

EVER heard of ABC magazine? It's the Australasian Bus and Coach magazine, and makes absolutely fascinating reading.

The Australian market is dominated by home-spun coaches with bull bars - mostly hefty-looking vehicles which, though no doubt luxurious, have a utilitarian

style about them. A quick glance through the complete list, operator by operator of EVERY vehicle (including midis) delivered in October (not many) shows a proliferation of Scania and MANs, two Volvo B10Ms, a rash of Hinos and plenty of Mercedes-Benz minis.

To say some of the vehicles are rugged is an

understatement. Want a 13-seat 4WD OKA coach (yes, coach). This awesome looking beast, for which you'd need a step ladder to get aboard, is up for grabs second-hand at £45,000. Of course, Australia's a right-hand-drive market so, if you could find a use for something like this, you know where to go.



Calendar with lots of big ones

OPERATORS with a love of trucks (come on, admit it) will by now be panting for a Volvo calendar (CBW, 7 December).

But if you haven't persuaded the man from Volvo sales to get you one, turn to the man from Scania

for some quality pictures. This one is a centre-opening calendar with pictures across the double-page spread... Scania trucks in a variety of European locations, most extremely spectacular.

No evidence of coaches in

this one, however, except for a tourist coach caught off guard, unloading in an Italian mountain pass. Bit of a PR disaster from Scania's point of view, since it's a Setra, now owned by trucking rivals Mercedes-Benz.

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1995 M DAF SB3000 WS Auto Van Hool Alizee 'H' 55R
1994 L EOS 90 49R, toilet
1994 L DAF WS3000 Van Hool Alizee 'H', 51R/Toilet
1994 L DAF KS3000 Easishift Van Hool Alizee 'H', 51R/Toilet
1994 L DAF SB3000 Van Hool Alizee 'DH', 51R/Toilet
1994 L DAF SB3000 Int Retarder, Van Hool Alizee 'DH', 51R/Toilet
1994 L DAF HS2700 Auto Van Hool Alizee 'H', 51R/Toilet
1994 L MB230LT Auto Van Hool Alizee 'H', 51R/Toilet
1993 K DAF KS3000 Auto Van Hool Alizee 'DH', 51R/Toilet
1993 K DAF SB3000 Van Hool Alizee 'DH', 51R/Toilet
1993 K DAF SB3000 Van Hool Alizee 'H', 51R/Toilet
1993 K DAF SB3000 Auto Van Hool Alizee 'H', 51R/Toilet
1993 K DAF SM230LT Van Hool Alizee 'H', 51R/Toilet
1992 J DAF SB2305 Duple 340, 57R
1992 J DAF SB3000 Van Hool Alizee 'DH', 51R/Toilet
1992 J DAF MB230LB Van Hool Alizee 'H', 51R/Toilet
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1995 M DENNIS DART Auto, 10M, Plaxton Pointer, 40 str bus
1992 J DAF SB220 Auto, Ikarus Citibus, 48 str bus

1991 H DAF SB2305 Van Hool Alizee 'DH', 51R Toilet
1990 G MB230LB Van Hool Alizee 'SH', 53R/Toilet
1990 G MB230LB Van Hool Alizee 'H'
1990 G DAF SB3000 Van Hool 'H', 49/Toilet
1989 F DAF SB2305 Van Hool Alizee 'DH', 53R
1989 F DAF SB2305 Van Hool Alizee 'DH' 51R/Toilet
1989 F DAF MB230LT Plaxton 3500, 51R/Toilet
1989 F DAF MB230LB Plaxton 3500, 52R
1989 F DAF MB 230LB Plaxton, 51R/Toilet
1988 E DAF SB2300 Van Hool Alizee, 51R/Toilet
1988 E DAF SB2300 Duple 340SL, 53R
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1993 K MAN, Jonckheere Deauville, 51R/Toilet
1993 K DAF SB2700 HS, Caetano Algarve, 53R
1990 G VOLVO B10M Plaxton 3500, 49R/Toilet
1990 G DAF DHTD Duple 320, 57R
1990 (G) SB3000 VAN HOOL ALIZEE DH, 51R/toilet, air con
1989 G SCANIA K113 Van Hool Alizee 'SH', 49R/Toilet
1989 F DAF MB230 Van Hool Alizee 'SH', 53R/Toilet
1989 (F) SB3000 VAN HOOL ALIZEE DH, 51R/toilet, air con
1989 PP BOVA FUTURA FHD, 49R/Toilet
1989 SB3000 Plaxton 3500, 51/Toilet
1988 VOLVO B10M, Plaxton 3500, 49R/Toilet
1988 PP BOVA FUTURA FHD, 49R/Toilet
1988 E DAF SB3000 Van Hool Alizee 'DH', 51R Toilet
1988 E SB3000 Van Hool Alizee SH 49R/Toilet
1987 E DAF SB2300 Plaxton 3500, 53R, air conditioned
1987 D DAF 2300 Van Hool Alizee 'H', 49R/Toilet
1987 D DAF SB 230LB Duple 340, 53R
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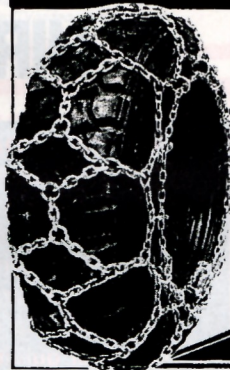
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LETTER OF THE WEEK



Why is there lack of basic facilities at these venues?

From Trevor Fogarty

I wish to draw the industry's attention to the lack of basic facilities for PCV drivers when visiting large venues such as the Birmingham NEC and Wembley Stadium. The parking fees for these venues are £10 and £25 respectively.

In neither of these places are there any facilities where drivers can relax from the stresses of driving in these modern times. The two venues mentioned could well say that there are facilities at these areas but my knowledge of drivers as a whole is that they prefer their own company rather than having to use the indoor facilities such as at the NEC, which tend to be expensive. The PCV industry carries enormous custom to these types of venues running into thousands of people on any one day.

It would seem that during the cold Winter months, the drivers' only option is to sit on their vehicles with the engines running just to keep warm — not entirely satisfactory for the environment. Would it be too much to ask for all large venues to at least give consideration to the basic needs of PCV drivers and provide somewhere warm where they can relax and get a reasonably priced meal?

It would be interesting to hear the comments from drivers and operators on this reasonable request.

*Trevor Fogarty
Managing director
Castleways (Winchcombe) Ltd
Winchcombe
Glos*

Man with a message

From Ashley Bailey

I note with interest the comment on 'cherished' number plates. I can think of a few, believe me.

However, a slight aside ...

You will have seen the panels on the back of HGVs, vans and (yes) coaches, reading something like "If this vehicle is being driven discourteously, please phone ..."

There's an HGV, regularly seen on the M6, whose driver must have spent some time in the States. His message reads "If this vehicle is being driven discourteously, phone 1-800-SCRU-YOU". (!)

I have yet to see this on a coach!

*Ashley Bailey
Newbury Data
Winsford
Cheshire*

Not the only one

From Gilbert Kinch

I write to correct Paul Creswell's letter (CBW, 2 November).

My comments refer to Paul S Winson competing with us in the same town ie Loughborough. Mr Cresswell was incorrect when he states he was the only independent.

Trent Buses, South Notts and Tourmaster were all independents in 1986 (not counting Midland Fox) and all operating within Loughborough.

County Travel, who took over Tourmaster, was a Leicester-based company and,

although it operated in Loughborough, was subsequently banned for operating illegally against us in 1987.

I enclose the relevant paperwork for your perusal.

*Gilbert Kinch
Chairman and managing director
Barrow-upon-Soar
Leicestershire*

A sighting in Nepal

From Philip Errington

You may be interested in the following letter received by ourselves:

"Dear Philip and Stuart

My wife and I have just returned from a marvellous holiday in India and Nepal — something I could not do at this time of the year while working at the football club — and thought you might be interested in a "sighting" in Nepal.

We went from Katmandu to Pokhara and back by Nepal Airways internal flight — the plane was not exactly last year's model — and, on arrival at Katmandu Airport, we were met by a coach/bus to take us to the arrivals rendezvous point to await our baggage.

On boarding the coach I was surprised to see a plate on the steps marked "Supplied by Erringtons of Evington, Leicester", with the old Leicester telephone number.

I made a few notes of the coach, which was a Vega 31 with coachwork by Duple. It also still bore an English registration number beneath glass at the rear, reading FJF 658L.

I can tell you that the coach definitely still goes, although is possibly due for a further service! Perhaps you should send a

Coach and Bus Week ending 21 December 1996

Write to: The Editor
Coach and Bus Week
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Peterborough PE1 1DS
fax: 01733 467154

e-mail: FrankF@
automotive.emap.co.uk



Keep those letters rolling in. If requested, we will publish them anonymously, but always include your full name (ie, first name and surname), address and telephone number



CORGI
CLASSICS

Letter of the week
wins a Corgi
Classics model bus

mechanic!

Best wishes

Alan K Bennett"

*Phillip Errington
Joint md
Erringtons of Evington
Evington
Leicester*

What a great bunch

From Rosemary Sutton

Good Heavens! Haven't you heard of the Transport Ticket Society! (CBW, 9 November). They are a splendid bunch who quietly get on with their hobby by patronising us all, just so that they can keep the tickets. What is more, if you have a special event, as I did when Great Orme Tramway celebrated its ninetieth anniversary, they help to produce a souvenir ticket. Not only that, they brought along vintage equipment and became part of the event. The passengers loved it. My contact is John Owen, telephone number 0195 728299 - definitely worth remembering.

*Rosemary Sutton
Tramway and coach manager
Great Orme Tramway & Tours - Llandudno
Gwynedd*



Dash layout is excellent, and the gearchange makes driving easy



Sliding door opens wide and reveals two high-visibility grab rails



Relay features a useful overhead luggage area above front seats

It's from the same factory as Fiat's Ducato but the Citroën version has something extra, says Mark Williams

Minib

THERE was a definite ring of familiarity about the Citroën Relay when it arrived, right down to the paint colour. The feeling of déjà vu was simple to explain; some months ago, I road tested the Fiat Ducato high-top, and the Relay 1800LWB High Roof is, in bodywork at least, the same vehicle. I thought I knew what to expect but, thankfully, its engine and the Advanced Conversion left me with a great deal new to say.

You either love or hate the slab-sided appearance of a high-topper like this. At the front, it's all nicely rounded, the transverse engine tidily tucked under a relatively short bonnet, and the lines smoothed over the screen.

From this point back, it's par for the course – plenty of right angles.

To my eyes, it's as good as any conversion visually, though there's certainly no getting away from the fact that the Ducato/Relay is designed with goods delivery in



Bus or crewbus?

mind. But how does it fare with people aboard?

Driving

The second impression you get of any vehicle is from the dash. It was a good start for the Relay.

The instruments are sensibly positioned for good visibility, and such niceties as the heating controls, radio and interior light switches within easy reach. The park/headlamp switch is tucked out of view, low and to the right of the steering column but, since the main lights are killed with the ignition, accidentally leaving the headlights on is not an issue.

The two column switches on the left of the wheel are for trafficator and main beam - the latter for some reason the longest, and the trafficator almost hidden under the wheel. This arrangement takes some getting used to - all too easy to go for a left turn and end up flashing your lights at an oncoming vehicle. The windscreen wash-wipe is on the right, and incorporates an intermit-

tent setting. The most obvious feature of the dash is the gear change lever, as on the Ducato. As I said in my earlier review, I find this preferable to a floor change. It's easy to reach and much more precise than most floor changes.

Starting the engine from cold gives you a false impression of the noise you can expect; once warm, this is one very quiet minibus. The example we tested was the most powerful in the range - a turbocharged 2.5-litre unit. Full marks to Citroën/Peugeot for having eliminated most of the vibration and chatter.

Its 103 hp and 170 lbf ft of torque translate into real potency. When the vehicle is unloaded, on a wet road, wheel-spinning is an easy trick to perform. First gear gets you rolling, second is ideal for slow manoeuvres and third is a good 'approaching the roundabout' gear. Fourth takes you from 35 mph to 50 mph or so, and fifth gets you all the way to 70 mph and beyond, though the gearing is such that the minibus feels happiest from 60





Buckle on diagonal makes belt suitable for kids

I wasn't over-impressed with the radio cassette or the heating system, more of which later. But was I unimpressed with anything else? Not really. The Citroën end of the deal acquits itself nicely. This is a top-notch base vehicle.

SPECIFICATION

Make: Citroën

Model: Relay 1800 LWB High Roof
Engine: 2.5 turbo diesel, in-line four, 103 bhp @ 4200 rpm. Torque 170lb ft/230Nm @ 2200rpm.

Gearbox: Five-speed

Braking: Hydraulic, front twin-caliper ventilated discs, rear drums with brake limiter valve. ABS optional.

Suspension: MacPherson Strut, front, semi-elliptical leaf springs, rear.

Tyres: 205/75

Advanced Vehicle Builders LX conversion features: 15 Euro seats with headrests and 'all age' adjustable seatbelts. IFS frame floor, non-slip vinyl flooring, footwell lights, interior saloon lights, body insulation, interior grab rails. Fire extinguisher and first-aid kit standard.

Price: around £24,320 plus VAT, including two years' unlimited mileage warranty and two years' Citroën Commercial Assist package

►►► mph to 70 mph.

And this minibus really is a joy to drive, delivering a gentle shove when the turbo whines into life and plenty of flexibility for lazy drivers. Steering is precise and there's little or no tendency to wander at speed.

On the test example, the throttle was inclined to stick down slightly, leading to a few embarrassing moments at the traffic lights before I lifted it with my toe. I doubt this is a general fault, and could have been cured with a drop of oil.

Fuel consumption wasn't tested, but I've no reason to doubt the 25 mpg suggested by Citroën. Incidentally, drivers should be warned that the fuel cap is on the front nearside wing. You can feel a real fool walking vacantly round the minibus at the filling station.

The Conversion

Advanced Vehicle Builders of Derbyshire had done a fairly standard style of conversion for the test vehicle - a 15-seater, arranged in four rows of three, with two in the front next to the driver.

That's the bit you see. What isn't visible is Citroën's Internal Frame System, tucked under the floor. IFS is nothing more or less than a steel, box-section frame which is secured through the van floor to the chassis itself. After the floor's been fitted, the seats are then attached to the IFS.

The safety advantages are that Citroën has then

been able to crash-test the Relay at MIRA to prove its point; and these days, properly safety-tested seatbelts are a good sales message for local authorities and commercial clients.

The Euro seats are excellent - large and comfortable, with headrests and with child-adjustable, three-point seatbelts. In the test vehicle, they were covered with a soft plush, but can be specified as vinyl. They are raised a couple of inches above the gangways.

The interior sports good plastic mouldings, interior lights, high-visibility grab rails around the side door and hard-wearing, vinyl flooring. Wheel arch intrusion is masked by seat position, and isn't noticeable. I was particularly impressed with the use of the roof space above the front seats as a luggage rack.

The step height to the side door is a quite lofty 560mm. The footwell lights are a nice touch, but an underfloor step would be a very useful extra, as would luggage racks. They can be specified.

The sliding ventilation windows are useful in Summer, and - in common with most van conversions - the heating system pretty poor. Additional heating is an option - take it! But everything said, this is a very smart conversion, with no obvious faults, and comes with fire extinguisher and first-aid kit.

It's only the layout that may not suit many operators. At 15 seats, there's not much aisle for large people, particularly as the aisle 'dog legs' around the rear two rows. Advanced's options on the LWB include a 17-seater, but it's only a feasible alternative for school children. The 16-seater with twin-width, tip-up rear seats offers the option of extra luggage space or extra passengers, and would be an obvious choice for many operators.

Conclusion

It's easy to drive, safe, well-equipped and a real performer, so what is naff about the Relay?

Not a lot. The price is hardly outrageous, and with the added value of Citroën's warranty and roadside assistance, may actually be more of a bargain than some 'cheaper' minibuses.

The Advanced Relay is a halfway house between true minibus, with a dedicated passenger door, and a crew-bus.

But in its class, it has several quality features. The best of them is that engine and the dash-mounted gear change - it's heaven to drive.



Sliding ventilation windows are a useful feature and lockable

All wrapped up

THE snow was falling now in dusty crystals in the yard, swirling round the floodlight, and oddly reminiscent of a shake-up Christmas paperweight.

Geoff Foster stood watching for the last of his Leopards to roll into the yard, his hands in his pockets and his face wearing a familiar frown. Bad enough that his driver, Billy, could now be digging the snow from under his wheels on one of the steep, Mendip hills. Worse still, he wondered how many more days he had left, master of all he surveyed.

It had been the toughest Autumn he could remember. He'd lost contracts, had two costly breakdowns, picked up two PG9s, and watched as interest waned in his usually packed shopping trips. The strain was telling, and his wife Anthea now rarely ventured from the bungalow to the yard, preferring to avoid his bad temper by burying her head in the books and the endless, unpayable bills.

Must be something in that 'Winter blues' syndrome the doctors say causes depression, he reflected after days without seeing the sun. But he knew the truth was less sanguine. Foster's Motors was on its knees, and Geoff Foster was on his own.

Ragged-edged posters hung on the walls, and a framed picture of his LAG Panoramic - the newest coach he'd ever owned, still going strong. Last year's wall planner, a mass of highlighter pen marks, was a sobering reminder of how badly business had suffered. The family portrait on the desk - Geoff, Anthea, his daughter Ellen and son Mark - were reminders of happier times.

Geoff could take it no more. He tramped sullenly out of the office, leaving the floodlights on, and threw a shovel into the Iveco with a view to locating Billy and helping him dig the coach out - perhaps return the few remaining children aboard to grateful parents. Grateful parents... now there's a thought, he mused as he slalomed along the lanes.

He couldn't have been more proud of Mark - now climbing the career ladder at Somerset Transport... engineering director, and only 35. Still not married, though. Ellen's marriage had taken her to Doncaster. Nobody's fool, Ellen. They had both helped Geoff through some busy times. These days, apart from the ritual family Christmas, he rarely saw them.

He rounded Brook Corner too fast, and the wheels just went from under the Iveco. With a massive jolt, the

back end hit the stone wall, the minibus spun and ended with the back in the ditch, front tilted up at a crazy angle, stuck fast on the bank. The drama had no effect on Geoff. He just turned up his collar and sat there, staring into the void of white, engine running.

It was as well he ended up off the road. Within minutes, a car appeared from the gloom, slowing but obviously sliding on the same ice. It came to rest, unharmed, directly in the beam of the Iveco's lights and, when the door opened, the sight of his son brought tears to Geoff's eyes.

"Dad?" Mark inquired as Geoff wound down the Transit window. "What are you doing out here?"

"I might ask you the same," said Geoff, leaving the relative comfort of the minibus to clutch his son to his chest. "I was trying to find Billy before I lost the Transit on this bend."

"I'd just put my suitcase in the house when the phone rang. Billy's left the bus at Walker's Farm. The kids are all home," Mark reassured his father. "Come on. I'll run you home, too."

As Mark coaxed the Granada up the hills, Geoff teased him: "If you'd emigrated to Australia, you'd still come home for your Mum's Christmas dinner."

Mark smiled. "I'm hoping for a few more dinners, too. I'm out of a job, Dad. We'll be bought out in the New Year by UK

Omnibus."

The news caused a sombre change of mood in Geoff: "What now, son? Only, I'm not sure there's a job here for you. To be honest, it's been tough. I lost the..." He was interrupted by Mark.

"Dad. I don't want a job. I cashed in my options. I want to buy you out. We will have a few bob to play with... get some newer coaches... new pit..."

Geoff wasn't listening. His hearing had failed him when he heard the word 'we,' and a long-forgotten smile returned to his lips.

As they walked up the drive, the snow creaking under foot, the smells of boiling bacon and parsley sauce caught their attention, and they simultaneously sniffed the air.

"By the way, Dad, I got you a great Christmas present. I dropped it off home before I came looking for you." Geoff stamped the snow off his boots on to the doorstep.

"I got my present half an hour ago."



It had been the toughest Autumn he could remember. He'd lost contracts, had two costly breakdowns, picked up two PG9s, and watched as interest waned in his usually packed shopping trips





OPTARE

Four Excels join Capital

DAGENHAM-based Capital City bus is the latest London operator to take delivery of the low-floor integral Optare Excel, with four 41 seaters entering service on a new supported route between Ilford, Newbury Park and the King George Hospital.

The new 396 service started five months ago as an accessible offshoot of a commercial service which does not serve the hospital.

Capital md Leon Daniels

said all four Excels were used in driver familiarisation duties on most of the company's network before settling in on the 396.

"We thought we'd let most drivers have an opportunity to drive them, and give most people a chance to ride them," he said.

"They have not caused us any problems in service, and I think that their space-age design will stimulate new traffic to and from the hospital."

VOLVO

First new fo

Metroline buys 22 Volvo/Alexander Olympians financed by contract arm of Volvo Bus

by Mike Morgan

LONDON Transport Buses route 52 has had a chequered existence over recent years with tendering and company changes leading to a succession of vehicle types and liveries appearing on the high-frequency link between Victoria and Willesden.

First victor in the tendering process was London Coaches with second-hand Leyland Titans but the Pullmans Group company sold its bus operation Pan Atlas which in turn was acquired by the current operator, former London Buses subsidiary, Metroline.

At first the Titans stepped aside to make way for Metrobuses, but now the 52 is getting its first new buses under the new regime with 22 Volvo Olympians bodied by Alexanders of Falkirk.

They are the first new double deckers to join management-owned Metroline since the company was privatised in October 1994 and have been financed through the contract arm of Volvo Bus.

Fitted with RH bodies, the buses meet London Schedule X and can accommodate 68 seated passengers and 15 standees.



PLAXTON

Beaver away in a tough environment

RHONDDA Buses, formed at the start of 1992 to take over the Porth depot operations of National Welsh, is continuing its programme of fleet modernisation with the delivery of 11 Plaxton Beavers on Mercedes-Benz chassis — two 709Ds and nine of the more powerful 711D model.

The new buses are replacing older minibuses, and are being used primarily on local services in the Porth area. Rhondda's is a tough operating environment with steep hills, justifying the use of the 105 bhp 711D chassis on many of the company's services.

To ease the driver's workload on routes which twist and turn through narrow streets, the new buses have automatic gearboxes and are fitted with retarders to extend brake lining

life. The Plaxton Beaver bodies have 27 seats with room for up to eight standing passengers. They join 23 Plaxton Pointers in the 100-strong fleet.

General manager Bill Peach said: "We bought one Beaver 12 months ago and we have been very pleased with its performance, which is why we have specified Plaxton bodies on our 1996 vehicle intake."

"They are replacing eight-year-old MCW MetroRiders and offer our customers improved accessibility with many DPTAC features."

Rhondda has expanded from its original base and now, together with its Parfitts subsidiary, serves an area which includes the Rhymney Valley with routes to Merthyr Tydfil, Tredegar and Newport in addition to its traditional network.



r the 52



SALVADOR CAETANO

There's still life in the Toyota Optimo III yet

AS the fourth-generation Toyota Optimo prepares to make its debut in UK coach operators' fleets, the run-out period for the Optimo III will see sales of the old model extend into the New Year.

Among those to take recent deliveries of

the six-cylinder Optimo III are Travelgreen of Doncaster and Warrens Coaches of Tenterden.

Both vehicles are 21-seat examples supplied by Salvador Caetano of Heather, the UK representative of the Portuguese body-builder.

Small vehicle specialist Travelgreen has added special marker lights and wheeltrims to its coach, which is named Lady Jae.

Warrens' otherwise standard GL spec is enhanced by the same distinctive livery it uses on its full-size vehicles. **CBW**



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 1987 D Dodge S56/East Lancs 27/29 seat bus, auto, white, MoT 8/97**£4,995**
 1987 D MCW MetroRider 23-seat bus, MoT 4/97 to 7/97, choice from**£4,995**
 1987 D Ford Transit 11-seat DI diesel non-psv, DI engine, overdrive box, MoT 7/97**£1,995**
 1987 D Sherpa Carlyle Mk I 20-seat buses, MoT 3/97 and 7/97, from**£1,995**
 1987 D Sherpa Carlyle Mk I 20-seat buses, Ford DI engine/boxes, MoT 2/97 and 8/97**£3,295**
 1986 C Dodge S56 East Lancs 26-seat bus, manual gearbox, MoT 8/97**£1,995**
 1985 C Ford Transit Robin Hood 16-seat bus, DI diesel, MoT 8/97**£1,495**

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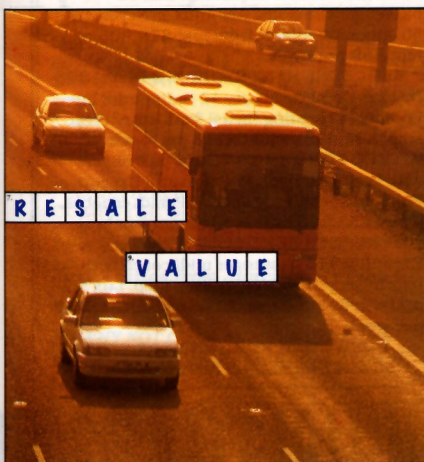
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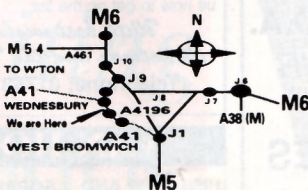
H FORD TRANSIT Hi roof Petrol with Ricon chair lift, lux seats and wheelchair tracking. **£8495**

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90 TOYOTA OPTIMO, 21, tested

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90 TRANSIT, 15 PSV diesel, Tested.

90 TRANSIT, LWB 12 seat diesel PSV

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89 DAF, Algarve exec 11.6, toilet, TV

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89 VOLVO IRIZER, 49 seats

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88/89/90 TALBOT, triaxles, 22+ standees.

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88 LEYLAND SWIFT, 32 coach & wheelchair lift,

88 FREIGHT ROVER, 16 diesel, PSV coach

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88 TRANSIT, 12, Petrol

88 TRANSIT, 14 diesel, PSV

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85 SETRA, exec, 49, toilet, TV

84 B10 VOLVO BERKHOF, executive, TV, toilet

84 MAN VAN HOOL ASTRON, 61 seats, toilet.

83 DODGE R BURGESS, diesel, auto, 17 F dr.

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67130/VSG

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67210VSM

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1983 VOLVO B10M PLAXTON 3200, 50 seater exe, toilet, wired TV/video, mark two front grille, tested March 1997, seatbelts, painted all white, nice condition£29,500 + VAT ono

1982 VOLVO B10M VAN HOOL ALIZEE, 46 seater exe, Grafitti remounted seats, toilet, wired TV/video, fridge, engine reconditioned 6 months ago, 12 months test, nice condition£29,000 + VAT ono

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67182VO

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67113VO

VOLVO

VOLVO B10M - PLAXTONS

1989 - 3500, 48 recliners, full spec with rear toilet, MoT Nov '97£58,500

1988 - 3500, 51 recliners, full spec with centre toilet, MoT Nov '97£52,500

Both in excellent condition

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0117 955 9086

67034VO

1995 B10 PREMIER, 49/53 double glazed, fridge, coffee, also 94 Volvo Premier, same spec as above, part exchange welcome. Also 95 Volvo Van Hool Alizee, many extras, low mileage. Tel Blythwood Motors 0141 221 3165 or 0141 639 6107 (evenings).

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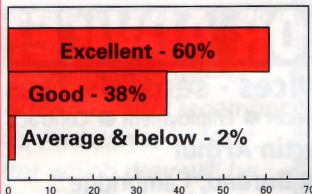
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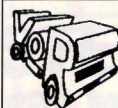
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65127/WIP

Coach and Bus Week ending 21 December 1996

Appointments & Tenders

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NORFOLK COUNTY COUNCIL Department of Planning and Transportation

Tenders are invited for the provision of local bus
services in the Breckland, Great Yarmouth, North
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Forms including full details are available on appli-
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Thursday, 9 January 1997.

67198/APP



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before 6 January 1997.

2. INFORMATION REGARDING THE OUTCOME OF TENDERS

Information published in accordance
with Sections 90 (2) and 90 (3) of the
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67026/TEN

Appointments & Tenders

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SOUTH GLOUCESTERSHIRE COUNCIL TRANSPORT ACT 1985

Tender No. LBS01/96

Tender No. LBS02/96

(Sewern Beach – Avonmouth Rail Link)

Tenders are invited for the provision of local bus services, in accordance with Section 89 of the Transport Act 1985. It is intended that the services will commence operation from 1st April 1997.

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**Director of Planning, Transportation and Environmental Services,
Public Transport & Rapid Transit Section,**

Avon House North,

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67031/TEN



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67032/APP

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To further develop our highly acclaimed fortnightly news magazine *Transit*, we are looking for an enthusiastic all-round journalist with an interest in public transport and the skills and commitment to co-ordinate the supply of news stories from a range of sources and their lively presentation on our news pages.

You will be able to sub-edit material supplied from our specialist correspondents and other sources, write items yourself and generate original stories as well as being competent with page make up using our Mac based DTP system.

This is a job for someone who wants to be at the heart of a lively news field, has an interest in buses, trains and rapid transit and who can juggle the ingredients that will add up to a quality news medium for a discerning professional audience.

Training is possible to complete the skills package required.

Transit is now published by a joint venture between EMAP Automotive and Landor, the specialist transport publisher.

The position will be based at Landor's offices on London's South Bank.

Salary c £17.5k according to age and experience.

Please write in confidence to:

Mark Barton

Publishing Director

EMAP Automotive

**Wentworth House, Wentworth Street
Peterborough PE1 1DS**

Interested in Running Dial-A-Ride Services in Hertfordshire?

Hertfordshire County Council, in partnership with the Borough and District Councils, currently provides a door-to-door Dial-a-Ride service throughout the county, for the use of people who find it difficult to use other passenger transport services. Dial-a-Ride contracts in most areas of the county are due to expire in the summer of 1997 and so the Passenger Transport Unit is putting together a list of operators who would be interested in tendering for new contracts to provide the service. The closing date for tenders will be late February 1997.

Tenders will be welcome either on the basis of the County Council providing the successful tenderer with specially designed vehicles for people with mobility difficulties to use in operating the contract or of the successful tenderer providing suitable vehicles as part of the contract.

For further information or to be included on the tender list, please contact: Passenger Transport Unit, Environment Department,

Hertfordshire County

Council, PO Box 99,

Hertford, Herts SG14 2RE.

Tel: (01992) 588640.



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JANUARY

Special Offers

1997 is upon us and we want to get the New Year off to a good start, so for the month of January we have more Special Offers than ever, take a look for yourself

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Return to Neil Mason, Coach and Bus Week, Wentworth House, Wentworth St, Peterborough PE1 1DS.

▼ Local Authority

Hants head

BOB Pinkett has been appointed Hampshire County Council's new head of passenger transport in the County Surveyor's Department upon the retirement of **Bob Gregory**. Previously the bus planning manager for the county council, Mr Pinkett, 40, moved to Hampshire in 1985 after starting in public transport with Nottingham City Transport and later joining Kent County Council's public transport team.

▼ Bus

Leaside honours

Night to remember for long-servers

by Mike Morgan

COWIE Leaside honoured its staff with more than 25 consecutive years with the company.

At a dinner hosted by managing director, **Steve Clayton**, the company presented each guest with an engraved Parker pen and certificate of long service as

well as Belgium chocolates for their dinner partner.

Special engraved crystal tankards were presented to the three longest-serving employees — engineering director **Ted Milburn** (39 years), coachmaker **Kevin Finnegan** (38 years) and driver/operator **Neville Giles** (36 years).



▼ Supplier

Aftermarket chief

DAVID Beattie (left) has been appointed UK aftermarket director of the T&N Friction Products Group to succeed **John Anderson** when he

retires on 31 March 1997. Currently Ferodo UK business manager, Mr Beattie, 45, began his career with Buxton-based Brake Linings in 1968.

▼ Consultancy

Promotions at Oscar Faber

OSCAR Faber has promoted five new regional directors and an associate director within its transportation planning business. **Andy Graham** and **Peter Yendall** (St Albans), **Paul Knight** (Birmingham), **Jonathan Oakes** (York) and **Dr Simon Temple MCIT** (Altrincham) all become regional directors. **Ajaz Chaudhri** (Altrincham) is promoted associate director and **Ian Kelly** (York) and **Rory Poole** (St Albans) become senior consultants. 



SUBSCRIPTION ORDER FORM

Coach and Bus Week is the news weekly for coach and bus operators. *Transit* provides vital analysis of, and information on, the UK public transport scene every fortnight. Together they make an unbeatable and invaluable package. All annual subscription rates include delivery by first class post. It is important to fill out all parts of this form. NB: *Transit* is not available on subscription without *Coach and Bus Week*.

Payment (please tick as appropriate)

Coach and Bus Week

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PLEASE ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.
YOUR COMPANY DETAILS

1. What is your primary job title?

(Tick one only)

- Owner/Director ☐ 01
Senior/General Manager ☐ 02
Engineering/Service Manager ☐ 03
Other (please specify) ☐ 04

2. What is your company's main business function?

- Bus Operator ☐ 01
Coach Operator ☐ 05
Coach & Bus Operator ☐ 02
Local Government ☐ 03
Other (please specify) ☐ 04

3. How many vehicles does your company own/operate?

(Tick all that apply)

- | | Buses | Coaches |
|----------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1-5 | ☐ 01 | ☐ 10 |
| 6-10 | ☐ 02 | ☐ 11 |
| 11-15 | ☐ 03 | ☐ 12 |
| 16-25 | ☐ 04 | ☐ 13 |
| 26-39 | ☐ 05 | ☐ 14 |
| 40-100 | ☐ 06 | ☐ 15 |
| 101-400 | ☐ 07 | ☐ 16 |
| 401-1000 | ☐ 08 | ☐ 17 |
| 1000+ | ☐ 09 | ☐ 18 |

4. Do you have responsibility for the recommendation/purchase and/or specification of the following?

(Tick all that apply)

- | | Pur | Spec | Rec |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Vehicles | ☐ 01 | ☐ 12 | ☐ 23 |
| Parts/Spares | ☐ 02 | ☐ 13 | ☐ 24 |
| Oil/Fuel | ☐ 03 | ☐ 14 | ☐ 25 |
| Breakdown | ☐ 04 | ☐ 15 | ☐ 26 |
| Insurance/Finance | ☐ 05 | ☐ 16 | ☐ 27 |
| Fuel Cards | ☐ 06 | ☐ 17 | ☐ 28 |
| Training | ☐ 07 | ☐ 18 | ☐ 29 |
| Venue/Attraction Tickets | ☐ 08 | ☐ 19 | ☐ 30 |
| Ferry Crossing | ☐ 09 | ☐ 20 | ☐ 31 |
| Hotel Bookings | ☐ 10 | ☐ 21 | ☐ 32 |
| Theatre Tickets | ☐ 11 | ☐ 22 | ☐ 33 |
| Other (please specify) | ☐ 34 | | |

5. What type of work does your company undertake?

(Tick all that apply)

- Private Hire ☐ 01
Day Excursions ☐ 02
British Tours ☐ 03
European Tours ☐ 04
Local Government Contracts ☐ 05
Emergency/Breakdown Services ☐ 06

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